

BIRCH WATHEN LENOX STUDENT PROFILE



Leadra Reeves '20

Leadra Reeves has nothing but love for Birch Wathen Lenox, having attended the school all the way through from Kindergarten. From the student body to faculty and staff, Leadra is grateful for the experiences and relationships she forged at BWL. They have shaped and continue to shape her future.

Current college/university:

Brown

Academic concentration/major:

Public Health

Academic/professional plans:

Community Health Worker



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A Service-Minded Explorer

ACADEMICS: EXPLORING PASSIONS NEW AND OLD

Leadra Reeves is excited about the possibilities before her. Now a junior at Brown, Leadra's innate curiosity and passion for the world around her has guided her through many disciplines over the years. While English was her favorite subject at BWL, she came into college studying sociology and Africana studies. Soon though, she made a switch to Public Health, to which she is now dedicated. To that end, Birch Wathen Lenox propelled Leadra to find enthusiasm in unexpected places.

While she was an especially promising English student in her time at BWL — having taken both AP English and a poetry independent study in her senior year — Leadra counts her physics teacher, Mr. DiNardo, as one of her favorite teachers. “One of my favorite people ever. He made physics really understandable, and he had a sense of humor. We're all here to learn, but not everything has to be so serious all the time. And he was there. Sometimes after school, I would go by his room, and ask something, and he would talk on a really conversational level. It's so much easier to connect like that, to know that you can be comfortable and still be serious.” Mr. DiNardo was also supportive of Leadra during a really difficult time in her life. “When my dad passed, he was one of the first people to say something to me. It was really nice. He said, ‘I know you work hard, and I know you always like to hand in everything spick-and-span, but give yourself a break for a minute.’”

Never one to shy away from a challenge, Leadra points to two of her English teachers, Ms. Anderson and Ms. Garbus, to round out her favorites for the way they instilled in their students a relentless pursuit to improve their writing and for valuing deep engagement with the material. “Ms. Anderson was to the point. I appreciated her. As a writer, I always wanted to do better. I was always happy with what I produced, but it doesn't stop there. I knew there was more I could do. It was really nice to have her be there and tell me, ‘you're doing great, and you could work on this.’” Likewise, Ms. Garbus “appreciated genuine hard work. When you show that you care about what you're handing in, when you show that your heart is in the work, she was very appreciative of that.” Even now, in her third year of college, Leadra points to her favorite teachers at BWL as her “number one supporters.” “The support is really strong because of the tight-knit community. You're able to sit down one-on-one and just talk. That happened a lot. I feel like my teachers genuinely wanted to help me.”

According to Leadra, the academic rigor at Birch Wathen Lenox prepared her to tackle college with the same interest and fearlessness she



enjoyed while in high school. “When I came into college, I already had the technical writing down, the varieties of creative form down. The teachers all pointed you towards the same goal. I felt very prepared.” The counseling and guidance she received around the college admissions process, too, mitigated any fear or overwhelm. “The college advisors were very helpful and very easy to talk to. If you’re ever worried, they’ll remind you of all your good qualities. I tend to spiral sometimes, so it’s really helpful to have professionals tell you that you’re fine, and you’re capable. It’s just really nice to hear when you feel down.”

Looking forward, Leadra is hoping to enroll in an accelerated Public Health program through Brown, with a concentration on Health Behavior, after which she hopes to become a Community Health Worker. “I want to be of service to my community, which is something I grew up caring about, thanks to Birch, and thanks to everyone who was really supportive. I still kept that core belief as I moved to Public Health.”

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**SOCIAL AND EXTRACURRICULAR LIFE:
SERVICE AND TRUST AMONG PEERS**

True to form, Leadra was involved in a whole host of extracurricular activities in her time at Birch Wathen Lenox, including:

- Musical theater
- A Capella
- Soccer
- Basketball
- Prefect program
- Diversity Club

The latter, Diversity Club, was an especially meaningful experience for her. “Having the club was really helpful to talk about issues, and make sure that we all feel that we’re here for a reason.” Through her involvement with Diversity Club, Leadra had the opportunity to attend the Student Diversity Leadership Conference. “We connected with people of color from other schools. It was really beautiful to speak freely.” Leadra describes herself as a shy person, and clubs and extracurriculars at BWL were a great path for taking her out of her shell. “It’s so much easier when you feel comfortable around people, and I felt really comfortable with every single activity I was a part of at Birch.” Leadra continues her work around diversity and inclusion at Brown as a member of the Black Student Union and the United League of Black Women. “I try to stay active and speak up, like I did at Birch.”

As for the student body as a whole, Leadra feels that the students benefit greatly from the continuity Birch Wathen Lenox provides. “I was there since Kindergarten — and so were a lot of people in my grade — and we were all pretty close. We all understood each other. We all had each other’s backs no matter what. I feel most comfortable when I know the people I’m around, and I know I can trust them.”

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GRATITUDE FOR ALL COMMUNITY MEMBERS

Leadra’s mother works for the BWL Upper School, and as a result, Leadra has had the opportunity to spend more time with the staff than the average student. “They were some key and important people to me. They make the school run. They make the school what it is. We were able to go to school every day because maintenance was there after-hours every day working and cleaning. They’re often underappreciated. I knew who everyone was, and they feel like family to me.” Leadra’s dedication to the community around her, fostered by her time at Birch Wathen Lenox, will be a boon to any and all communities Leadra steps into.

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IN HER TEACHER’S WORDS

I have been a teacher for over 20 years, and, like anyone who has been in this profession that long, I have students that remain with me: some for being funny, others for working really hard, and those that were naturally gifted in Science. Leadra had all of those attributes, but what I remember most about her was the way she lifted up those around her. While she always worked tirelessly to revise a draft of a laboratory report or make certain her homework was amazing, Leadra also made sure that her peers were doing well. She was the one that asked the question that everyone else was wondering, but didn’t want to appear like they didn’t know the material. Leadra would also bring other students with her when she came for extra help and encouraged other students to do the volunteer drafts, like she did, so they could learn and grow just like her. If BWL had an alumni Hall of Fame, Leadra would be enshrined in it not only for her individual achievements, but also because of the way she helped those in our community.

— *Mr. DiNardo, BWL science teacher and Upper School co-director*